

VISIONS & VIEWS ON MUNICIPAL RENEWAL
FROM THE COMMUNITY FORUMS



TASK FORCE

ON MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE RENEWAL

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE
FOR SASKATCHEWAN
IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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1. INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a summary of what participants said at the eleven Community Forums held by the Task Force on Municipal Legislative Renewal during the fall of 1999 in southern and central Saskatchewan. Similar forums are planned for northern Saskatchewan in the near future.

This document provides an overview of participants' visions and views on:

- the ideal municipal system;
- the need for renewal;
- the directions for renewal;
- the approaches to renewal.

It attempts to echo the essence of the conversations and debates at the Community Forums regarding each of those matters, rather than providing a comprehensive transcript of all the comments. A special effort has been made to echo both the common or shared visions and views, and the competing or divergent visions and views.

2. PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

The purpose of the Community Forums was to provide individuals and organizations an opportunity to participate in roundtable discussions and the presentation of briefs. The roundtable discussions focused on three key questions:

- a. What is Your Vision of the Ideal Municipal System?
- b. What are the Problems in the Municipal System?
- c. What are Some Options for Municipal Renewal?

3. PARTICIPANTS AT THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

A total of 364 people participated in the eleven Community Forums. Key comments expressed orally by various participants were recorded on flip charts by the Task Force's staff. Approximately one-third of all participants (115) returned their written questionnaires. Approximately one dozen participants presented briefs.

Although some members of the general public participated in the Forums, the majority of participants were officials from the municipal government sector (i.e., mayors, reeves, councillors and municipal administrators).

4. PARTICIPATION AFTER COMMUNITY FORUMS

The Task Force continues to encourage your participation in municipal renewal. The Community Forums represent a major round of consultations, but they are not the only or final round. Individuals and organizations can still share their visions and views with the Task Force at any time prior to the completion of its mandate in August 2000. Anyone wishing to make a submission should contact the Task Force office for a copy of the "Discussion Paper" and the "Issues and Options Workbook" released earlier this year. The Task Force's address is at the end of this document.

5. MOVING BEYOND THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

Within the first two months of the year 2000 the Task Force will release a brief Interim Report that will outline some general but relatively concrete directions for municipal renewal that it will explore in greater detail during the remainder of its mandate.

6. AREAS OF AGREEMENT & DISAGREEMENT

This overview of the visions and views expressed by participants at the Community Forums, as well as visions and views expressed by participants to the Task Force in previous consultations and submissions during the past year, reveal the following areas of agreement and disagreement:

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

General Need to Renew the System

- There is substantial agreement on the need to renew the municipal system in Saskatchewan for the 21st Century.

Continued Discussion on Renewal

- There is substantial agreement on the need to continue the public discussion regarding the nature of the municipal system for Saskatchewan in the 21st Century.

Need for Concrete Models

- There is substantial agreement on the need to provide some concrete models for discussing directions on renewing the municipal system.

Vision of the Ideal Nature of Municipal System

- There is agreement on a general vision of the ideal nature of the municipal system for Saskatchewan in the 21st Century.

Directions on Purpose, Status, Powers, Functions & Finances

- There is substantial agreement on directions for renewal to the purpose, status, powers, functions and finances of municipal governments.

Directions on Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- There is substantial agreement on the importance of increased and improved inter-municipal cooperation.

AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT

Directions on Forms or Types of Municipalities

- There is disagreement on directions for renewal to the forms or types of municipalities.
 - Some favour the current forms/types
 - Some favour the elimination of some current forms/types
 - Some favour the modification of some current forms/types
 - Some favour new forms/types

Directions on Consolidation of Municipalities

- There is substantial disagreement on directions for consolidating the number of municipalities.
 - Some favour no consolidation
 - Some favour minor consolidation
 - Some favour major consolidation

Directions on Processes and Approaches to Renewal

- There is substantial disagreement on the processes and approaches to two key matters: consolidation of municipalities, and increasing and improving inter-municipal cooperation.
 - Some favour a voluntary approach.
 - Some favour a mandatory approach.

Participants at the Community Forums articulated what amounts to a shared vision of municipal governance for the 21st Century. The vision can be summarized as follows:

- 1. PURPOSEFUL**
 - Municipal governments should have a clear and significant purpose within the governmental system and they should perform significant functions for their communities, economies, residents and ratepayers.
- 2. POWERFUL**
 - Municipal governments should be powerful governing entities with significant status, authority and autonomy in performing their functions and fulfilling their purpose.
- 3. CAPABLE**
 - Municipal governments should be powerful governing entities with substantial organizational capacity, especially the financial resources and human resources, needed for performing their functions and fulfilling their purpose.
- 4. COOPERATIVE**
 - Municipal governments should have the will and the means to cooperate with each other and with other governing entities in performing their functions and fulfilling their purpose.
- 5. DEMOCRATIC, ACCESSIBLE & ACCOUNTABLE**
 - Municipal governments should be democratic, accessible and accountable to residents and ratepayers in performing their functions and fulfilling their purpose.
- 6. EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT**
 - Municipal governments should be effective and efficient in performing their functions and fulfilling their purpose.

III. VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR RENEWAL

1. RENEWAL OF THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

The Community Forums revealed a divergence of views on the need for renewal to the municipal system.

There were three general points of view:

- No Renewal is Needed
- Minor Renewal is Needed
- Major Renewal is Needed

Among participants who felt that either minor or major renewal was required the principal focus was on the need for renewal to municipal finances, municipal functions (i.e., roles and responsibilities), and municipal forms (i.e. types and number). Invariably, however, there were differences of opinion on the precise nature and scope of renewal to these elements of the municipal system.

NO RENEWAL IS NEEDED

- Some participants indicated that there is no need for renewal to the municipal system.
- Those who shared this view indicated the current system is working well and that no adjustments were required because the municipal system provides both an effective and efficient mode of service delivery and planning and development for communities and their economies.
- Such participants felt that the only thing that could improve the system was reducing the financial pressures being experienced by municipal governments and their ratepayers.

MINOR RENEWAL IS NEEDED

- The majority of participants indicated that minor renewal either to some or all parts of the municipal system is needed.
- Such participants argued that various parts of the system required a "minor tune-up" to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency both in service delivery and in planning and development.

MAJOR RENEWAL IS NEEDED

- Some participants indicated that major renewal is required either to some or all parts of the municipal system.
- Such participants argued that the current system is not working as well as it could or should in providing the most effective and efficient mode of service delivery or planning and development framework for communities and their economies.

2. RENEWAL OF THE "SPECIAL PURPOSE BODIES" SYSTEM

THE "SPECIAL PURPOSE BODIES" SYSTEM SHOULD BE RENEWED

- Many participants in the Community Forums also indicated that in addition to renewal directly within the municipal system, some renewal is required to the "special purpose bodies" system that has developed near and around municipal government.
- Many participants expressed concern with the increasing degree of fragmentation caused by the number of special purpose agencies, boards and committees emerging in the various parts of the province.
- A few examples of such special purpose bodies include: library boards, parks and recreation boards, economic development authorities, district planning authorities, transportation advisory committees, water and irrigation authorities, and waste management authorities.
- Many participants suggested that it would be beneficial for municipal governments, their communities and economies if the number of special purpose bodies were reduced.
- Such participants argued that the vast number of such special purpose bodies... create problems not only in communication, coordination and cooperation, but also both in accessibility and accountability and in the distribution of costs and benefits among member communities.

3. RENEWAL OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT... SYSTEM SHOULD BE RENEWED

- Many participants at the Community Forums indicated that in addition to a renewal to the municipal and local government systems, there is a need for a renewal to the provincial government system.
- In particular they emphasized the need for renewal to those elements of the provincial government system that have a major effect on the municipal system. This included provincial financial transfers to municipalities, provincial policies and programs and the organization and the roles and responsibilities of various provincial departments, agencies, boards and commissions.
- They indicated that renewal to the municipal system cannot and should not occur in isolation from renewal to the provincial government system.

VI. VIEWS ON MAJOR PRESSURES FACING THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Participants indicated that as we move toward the 21st Century the municipal system is facing some major pressures.

It was generally recognized that these pressures are more likely to increase than to diminish in the near future.

All participants recognized that these pressures are having and would continue to have a profound effect on municipal governments and their communities, economies, and ratepayers.

All participants also recognized the immense challenge that municipal governments face in trying to manage the substantial negative effects of these pressures on their communities, economies and ratepayers.

The pressures most commonly cited as facing them were those emanating from some major demographic and economic trends.

1. MUNICIPALITIES ARE FACING PRESSURES FROM DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

• The major demographic trends cited as creating pressures for the municipal governments and their communities, economies, and ratepayers included the following:

- Declining population of many if not most communities;
- Increasing population of some communities (e.g., large urban and resort communities, and R.M.'s near large urban centres);
- Aging population of many communities.

2. MUNICIPALITIES ARE FACING PRESSURES FROM ECONOMIC TRENDS

• The major economic trends cited as creating pressures for municipal governments and their communities, economies, and ratepayers included the following:

- Changes in the modes of transportation for agricultural commodities and other materials (e.g., shift from railways to roadways);
- Location of industrial and commercial enterprises in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (e.g., elevators, industries, major department stores).

Participants identified an array of general problems in various parts of the municipal system.

These are identified in point form below.

1. MUNICIPAL PURPOSE
 - Unclear & Undefined Municipal Purpose
2. MUNICIPAL STATUS
 - Lack of Recognition of Municipal Status
3. MUNICIPAL POWERS
 - Insufficient Authority and Autonomy
 - Insufficient Corporate, Regulatory, Financial & Service Powers
4. PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONS
 - Unclear Division of Roles and Responsibilities
 - Insufficient Provincial-Municipal Consultations
 - Insufficient Provincial-Municipal Coordination
 - Too Much Provincial Dominance & Interference
 - Too Much Provincial Downloading
5. MUNICIPAL FUNCTIONS
 - Unclear Division of Municipal Functions
 - Inadequate Planning & Development
6. MUNICIPAL FINANCES
 - Insufficient Financial Resources
 - Over Reliance on Property Tax Base
 - Inequitable Distribution of Costs & Benefits of Developments among Neighbouring Municipalities
7. MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT
 - Insufficient Accessibility & Accountability
 - Insufficient Interest in Municipal Elections
8. INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION
 - Insufficient Communication, Coordination & Cooperation
 - Duplication of Services, Facilities, Equipment & Staff
 - Inequities in Sharing Costs and Benefits
 - Too Many Overlapping Jurisdictions
9. FORMS OF MUNICIPALITIES
 - Inadequate Enforcement of Criteria for Municipal Status
 - Too Many Small Municipalities
 - Too Many Special Purpose/Local Authorities
10. MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION
 - Unduly Complex & Confusing
 - Unduly Inflexible & Restrictive

Many participants identified three major interrelated problems of capacity in the municipal system.

Generally they believed that these problems are caused largely by the pressures and problems identified in the previous two sections of this document.

The major capacity problems most commonly identified were:

1. PROBLEMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Many participants indicated that a substantial number of municipal governments do not have sufficient organizational capacity for effective governance and management.
- They indicated that many municipalities did not have sufficient power, financial resources, or human resources to govern in a way that they could best serve the needs and preferences of their ratepayers and residents.

2. PROBLEMS IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

- Many participants indicated that the organizational capacity problems faced by a substantial number of municipal governments compromised the planning and development capacity of municipal governments.
- Aspects of planning and development that were seen as particularly affected by such a lack of capacity were land-use planning and development, community planning and development, and economic planning and development.

3. PROBLEMS IN SERVICE DELIVERY CAPACITY

- Many participants indicated that the organizational capacity problems faced by a substantial number of municipal governments also compromised the service delivery capacity of municipal governments.
- Aspects of service delivery that were seen as particularly affected by such a lack of capacity were "hard services" such as roads, water, waste disposal, and "soft services" such as leisure, recreation, culture, policing, fire and emergency services.

1. PURPOSE OF MUNICIPALITIES

THE PURPOSE OF MUNICIPALITIES
SHOULD BE CLARIFIED

- In most Community Forums, participants began their "visioning" of the ideal municipal system with calls for a clear definition of the purpose of municipal governments.

THE PURPOSE OF MUNICIPALITIES
SHOULD BE STATED IN
LEGISLATION

- Some participants indicated that the purpose of municipalities should be stated explicitly in municipal legislation.
- Some participants indicated that such a statement of purpose would clarify the reasons for establishing municipalities, their status, their roles and responsibilities, their relations with the provincial government and other governing authorities.

THE PURPOSE OF MUNICIPALITIES
SHOULD BE TO GOVERN AND
SERVICE COMMUNITIES

- Generally participants agreed that the fundamental purpose of municipal governments is to provide the type of governance, management, planning and development, and the delivery of public services within their boundaries that meets the needs and preferences of their respective ratepayers and residents.

2. STATUS OF MUNICIPALITIES

MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE
RECOGNIZED AS AN ORDER OF
GOVERNMENT

- Generally participants favoured the recognition of municipalities as a legitimate and bona fide order of government.

- Many indicated that such recognition would affirm that municipal governments are relatively autonomous: "governance agents of local communities" rather than "administrative agents of the province."

THE STATUS OF MUNICIPALITIES
SHOULD BE ENTRENCHED IN
DOCUMENTS

- Most participants agreed that the status of municipalities as an order of government should be enshrined in key documents that would have some legal and moral basis in inter-governmental relations and in the courts.

- Unfortunately, the issue of which documents should be used to recognize and safeguard the status of municipalities was not resolved.

- Suggestions regarding the type of documents that should be considered for entrenching the status of municipal governments included constitutional amendment, provincial legislation, provincial-municipal protocol agreement.

- Many participants were aware of the obstacles encountered in the past by those who sought to entrench municipal governments as an order of government in the national constitution.

- Many participants were interested in exploring the use of the other types of documents listed above for ensuring that municipalities are recognized as an order of government.

- Generally, participants were less interested in the type of documents that were used to recognize and safeguard the status of municipalities as they were in ensuring that it is done effectively.

**3. AUTHORITY &
AUTONOMY OF
MUNICIPALITIES**
THE AUTHORITY & AUTONOMY
OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE
INCREASED

- There was a strong and widespread feeling among participants that the authority and autonomy of municipal governments should be increased.
- A comment indicative of this feeling is: "Municipalities should have the power and authority to do what they want to do, what they can afford to do and what they have the capacity to do" in the interest of their communities and ratepayers.
- Key areas that were singled out as requiring more municipal authority and autonomy (and less provincial regulation and restrictions) included:
 - Delivery of services;
 - The internal affairs of municipalities – e.g., management practices, council operations, human resource decisions, etc.;
 - The planning and development of communities – e.g., requirement for approvals of municipal development plans, etc.
- In criticizing the unduly high degree of provincial government involvement, interference and regulation in these areas, participants noted the following:
 - The municipal governments are best placed to determine the needs and preferences of their communities;
 - The local electorate is very effective in holding councils accountable for their own internal affairs, the province shouldn't second guess the electorate by second guessing councils; and
 - In some municipalities, the professional expertise for planning and development far exceeds that of the provincial government.

PROVINCIAL AUTHORITY IN
MUNICIPAL MATTERS SHOULD
BE LIMITED

- There was a widespread belief among participants that the provincial government has an important role in municipal governance.
- Most, however, believed that in performing its role, the provincial government should limit to the greatest extent possible the degree of its intervention in spheres of municipal jurisdiction.
- More specifically, they believed that the provincial government should limit its interventions to matters for which there is a need to:
 - Protect individual and group rights;
 - Protect the public interest; and
 - Foster and facilitate inter-municipal coordination & cooperation.
- Toward that end, the provincial government should establish:
 - The legislative framework and the parameters within which municipalities are to operate and function;
 - Provincial standards, guidelines and regulations; and
 - A system of distributing and redistributing financial resources among municipalities.

4. PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONS

THE PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE IMPROVED

Many participants suggested that the provincial-municipal relationship should be improved in several key areas including those listed below.

Provincial-Municipal Consultative and Coordinating Mechanisms

- The "Provincial-Municipal Roundtable" should be more than a vehicle for discussion. It should be a forum for negotiating policies, programs, and agreements on a range of matters, including municipal finances.

Equality in the Provincial-Municipal Relationship

- Municipalities should be equal partners when sitting at the "Provincial-Municipal Roundtable."

Municipal Legislation and Regulations

- Municipalities should have more say in the formulation of legislation that affects municipalities and municipal governance.

Agreements Signed by the Province with Other Governments

- Municipalities should have more say in provincial agreements with other agencies and authorities that affect municipalities;

Municipal Advisory Services

- Municipal Advisory Services should either be eliminated or their capacity increased to assist municipalities with more complex and substantial statutory, regulatory, and legal issues related to matters that municipal officials must deal with.

Provincial Policies and Programs

- Major provincial policies and programs that will have a significant affect on municipalities and their communities should be developed in consultation with municipalities.
- Municipalities should receive sufficient notification and lead-time to make adjustments in response to any major policy or program changes by the provincial government.
- The roles and responsibilities of municipalities related to any particular provincial policy or program should be stated explicitly and clearly.

**5. FUNCTIONS OF
MUNICIPALITIES**
FUNCTIONS OF MUNICIPAL
GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE
CLEARLY IDENTIFIED IN
LEGISLATION

MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD
PERFORM EACH OF THE CORE
GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS

MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE
RESPONSIBLE BOTH FOR "HARD"
AND "SOFT" SERVICES

- Many participants felt that the general functions and the corresponding major roles and responsibilities of municipalities should be clearly identified.
- It was felt that a clear identification of those functions would do the following:
 - Reduce overlap and duplication between provincial and municipal governments;
 - Reduce confusion regarding financial and political responsibility;
 - Reduce provincial downloading of functions and financial responsibility.
- Most participants indicated, either explicitly or implicitly, that municipalities should perform each of the core governance functions within their boundaries, including:
 - Strategic Planning and Development;
 - Service Delivery;
 - Bylaw Enactment and Enforcement;
 - Taxation.
- There were some differences of opinion, however, on the extent to which municipalities should have primary financial responsibility for various types of planning and development and the delivery of certain types of services.
- Some participants indicated that whereas some municipalities had the financial and organizational means or capacity to perform both the planning and development function and the service delivery function very well, others did not.
- This issue generated some debate on the best means to ensure that all municipalities had the financial and organizational means or capacity to perform planning and development functions and service delivery functions. The debate ranged from greater financial resources for all municipalities, increased and improved inter-municipal cooperation, to consolidation of municipalities.
- Participants debated whether municipalities should focus on the "hard" services, which involve infrastructure, roads, water, sewer, waste management, or whether they are also responsible for the "soft" services such as protective services including policing, fire, and emergency measures, and culture and recreation.
- Many participants indicated that municipal governments should be responsible both for "hard" services and "soft" services.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
BE PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR
"HARD" SERVICES**

- Some participants indicated that municipal governments should be responsible only for "hard services" (e.g., roads, water, sewer, waste/garbage management).
- This was primarily prominent in discussions regarding the purpose and functions of rural municipalities. Several participants indicated that either their sole or at least principal function should be to take care of grid roads.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH,
EDUCATION, OR WELFARE**

- There was general agreement among participants that health and education are provincial responsibilities both in terms of delivery and in terms of financing. However, some people felt that local or municipal input and representation in health care and education delivery is desirable.

**OTHER FUNCTIONS & SERVICES
SHOULD BE DETERMINED
BY LOCAL ELECTORATE**

- Many participants felt that other municipal roles, responsibilities and functions, outside of core or essential functions, should largely be determined by the needs and desires of the electorates of individual communities and municipalities.
- Whereas some people consider the optional or discretionary roles, responsibilities and functions to include planning, economic/community development, culture, parks and recreation, others consider many of these to be essential core municipal governance functions.

6. MUNICIPAL FINANCES

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
HAVE ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT
FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

- Participants agreed that municipal governments should have access to sufficient financial resources needed to perform their functions.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
HAVE GREATER PROPERTY TAX ROOM**

- There was also considerable agreement among participants that municipal governments should have greater tax room in the property tax base by reducing the amount of tax room being used for education by school divisions.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
HAVE MORE FREEDOM
IN TAXATION MATTERS**

- Some participants also suggested that municipal governments should have greater freedom in choosing the means or modes of taxation in raising the required revenues to perform their functions.

**THE PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL
REVENUE-SHARING SYSTEM SHOULD
BE IMPROVED**

- Many participants suggested that the provincial-municipal revenue-sharing system should be improved.
- Most participants, however, indicated that they wanted to see the amount of revenues being shared increased substantially.
- Some, however, indicated that in light of the limited amount of revenues that were being shared, serious consideration should be given to eliminating the system.

**THE PROVINCIAL GRANTS TO
MUNICIPALITIES SYSTEM SHOULD
BE IMPROVED**

- Many participants agreed that the provincial grants to municipalities system should be improved.
- Many indicated that the current system suffers from:
 - insufficient stability and predictability in funding from year to year;
 - inadequate formulas (e.g., per capita) for meeting revenue needs of small and large municipalities for infrastructure replacement, capital works, policing, etc.
 - inadequate redistribution and return of resources and revenues taken out of communities (i.e., through sales, fuel and income taxes);
 - insufficient flexibility and local say in how grants and transfers can be spent.

**7. INTER-MUNICIPAL
COOPERATION**
INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION
SHOULD BE INCREASED AND
IMPROVED

- Many participants indicated that inter-municipal cooperation should be increased and improved.
- Whereas many pointed to the substantial degree of inter-municipal cooperation that occurs among neighbouring municipalities for a wide variety of functions, services and activities including: fire protection, economic development, planning, recreation, transportation and waste management, others indicated that there is still considerable room for increased and improved cooperation.
- Many participants indicated that instead of forcing inter-municipal cooperation the provincial government could foster and facilitate greater cooperation through any of three major means listed below:

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
SHOULD FACILITATE
INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

Facilitating Discussion on the Need for and Nature of Cooperation

- Provincial facilitation of discussion and cooperation at the grass roots level could enhance inter-municipal cooperation.

Eliminating Obstacles to Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- Many participants felt that obstacles to inter-municipal cooperation should be removed.
- In identifying obstacles to cooperation they pointed to restrictive statutory provisions and regulations and inequities in cost-sharing formulas.

Provide Incentives for Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- Most participants indicated that they wanted to see the provincial government provide incentives for inter-municipal cooperation.
- Whereas some participants felt that the provincial government should provide incentives for inter-municipal cooperation, others did not feel that this was needed or appropriate.
- Some of those who favoured the use of incentives indicated that monetary incentives such as seed money for researching the feasibility of cooperative initiatives and removing GST and PST on shared equipment would provide the extra "push" needed for some municipalities to cooperate.
- Those who opposed incentives indicated that although incentives to encourage inter-municipal cooperation might help, financial incentives to encourage municipalities to work together are self-defeating and once the incentives are removed, the cooperation ends.

**8. MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE
& MANAGEMENT**

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
SHOULD BE CLOSE TO RESIDENTS
AND RATEPAYERS

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO
RESIDENTS AND RATEPAYERS

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE TO
RESIDENTS AND RATEPAYERS

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
SHOULD INCREASE INSTANCES OF
DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- Many people indicated that local representation that is in close proximity to residents is one of the most important elements of any municipal government system. This type of representation, people state, helps (although it does not ensure) local politicians to keep in touch with the needs, desires and problems of ratepayers and communities. As well, it allows for (but again, does not ensure) greater accessibility and communication between ratepayers and elected officials.
- Some participants indicated that municipal governments should be more responsive to the needs and preferences of residents and ratepayers.
- Municipal councils and councillors are not always speaking on behalf of their residents and ratepayers, nor are they always listening to what citizens and ratepayers and volunteer and advisory boards are saying, particularly regarding changes to the system.
- Many feel there needs to be more opportunities for direct democracy where residents and ratepayers make decisions for their community such as public votes or even citizen assemblies.
- In addition, some mention the need for more engaging processes between councils and residents where residents are advised as to what is happening in terms of planning, economic development and financial issues, and have the opportunity to question councillors regarding possible decisions.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT,
ACCESSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE**

- There is a general perception that the system of municipalities and other local, regional and provincial authorities, boards and commissions is unnecessarily complex and inaccessible.
- There is consensus that the system requires greater simplicity, openness and transparency in terms of all of the following:
 - Identifying and defining the representation on, and responsibility of, the various local authorities, boards and commissions;
 - Understanding the system of property taxes, user fees, grants and transfers, how they are derived and how they are spent;
 - Understanding the processes for public participation, accessibility, accountability, communication and information.

**A MUNICIPAL OMBUDSPERSON
OFFICE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED**

- In keeping with the above calls for greater accountability, openness and transparency in the municipal system, some participants suggested the creation of an office of Municipal Ombudsperson.
- Some feel that an Ombudsperson would mediate disputes between ratepayers and local councils and thereby minimize the need to refer such disputes to either the courts or to the provincial government. Moreover, they feel that such a person could make recommendations on eliminating regulations, policies or practices that create problems both for municipalities and their residents and ratepayers.

**MUNICIPAL ELECTION PROCESSES
SHOULD BE IMPROVED**

- Many participants indicated that the municipal election system should be improved.
- The concerns were not with the integrity of the system, but with its ability to foster interest and participation.
- Problems identified by participants include voter apathy, lack of candidates, the disenfranchisement of seasonal residents and insufficient notification of elections.
- Generally they want to see changes that would increase both the number of candidates and the level of voter turnout.
- Toward that end some participants advocated measures such as:
 - More concurrency in all types of elections (i.e., municipal, health, education);
 - More access to voting through innovative means such as the Internet;
 - A cap on election expenses by candidates.

9. FORMS OF MUNICIPALITIES

Participants' views regarding possible directions for renewal to the forms of municipalities focused on three key issues:

- A. Types of Municipalities
- B. Consolidation of Municipalities
- C. Consolidation of Municipal and Non-Municipal Entities

Views regarding each of the above issues were often divergent.

A. TYPES OF MUNICIPALITIES

THE CURRENT TYPES OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE RETAINED

- Some participants felt that the current types of municipalities should be retained.

SOME CURRENT TYPES OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE ELIMINATED

- Some participants felt that some current types of municipalities (e.g., organized hamlets, resort villages) should be eliminated or at least that a moratorium should be placed on the creation of any of these types of municipalities.
- Some participants, however, indicated that the creation of such types of municipalities should not be impeded if they meet either the existing or any new criteria for municipal incorporation.
- Such participants felt that to do so would inhibit progress and prevent these communities from realizing their potential or addressing their needs; needs that might otherwise be unsatisfied within their existing structure.

SOME NEW TYPES OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED

- Some people felt there may be a need for new and innovative types of municipalities including:
 - Types that can accommodate urban and rural amalgamations ("Rurbans");
 - Types that can accommodate amalgamations of two or more neighbouring urban communities and/or municipalities that are separated by a strip of rural municipality;
 - Types that can accommodate city regions (i.e., cities and neighbouring municipalities);
 - Single-tier regional municipalities that replace all other types of municipalities and authorities within a certain region;
 - Two-tier regional municipalities that perform certain functions and deliver certain services at a regional level, with the current types of municipalities performing certain functions and delivering certain services at the local level.

NEW TYPES OF REGIONAL MUNICIPAL "AUTHORITIES" SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED

- Some participants felt that new types of regional municipal "authorities," similar to those that have been established for waste management, rather than regional municipalities, should be established to provide coordinated, cooperative and integrated service delivery and planning and development on a regional basis.

**NEW TYPES OF REGIONAL
MUNICIPAL "AUTHORITIES"
SHOULD NOT BE ESTABLISHED**

- Other participants, however, felt that the creation of regional "authorities" should not be created.
- They argued that the creation of such "authorities" amounted to the creation of a second tier of governance or administration and opposed it for three major reasons:
 - Because it would create more, not less, governance and administration;
 - Because it is difficult for regional authorities to operate in a way that will satisfy all member municipalities; and
 - Because member municipalities would not cooperate effectively with such an authority.

**THE CURRENT CLASSIFICATION
CRITERIA FOR MUNICIPALITIES
SHOULD BE CHANGED**

- Several participants suggested changing the existing criteria in municipal legislation for the incorporation and status of different types of municipalities. Some suggestions included:
 - Establish new criteria based on viability and ability to provide services that would apply to all municipalities;
 - Develop a formula that determines the minimum threshold for defining what a municipality is – such as population, assessment, services provided, etc.;
 - Establish some minimum criteria for rural municipalities such as population, assessment, land base, etc.

**THE CRITERIA FOR ALL
MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE
ENFORCED BY THE MINISTER**

- There is general agreement from almost all participants, that the minimum criteria (i.e., population) for municipal incorporation and status should be enforced by the provincial government on all existing municipalities.
- Most participants believe that those municipalities who no longer meet this minimum criteria should be encouraged or forced to revert to a different municipal status, dissolve and/or consolidate as per the provisions in current legislation.

B. CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

**MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD NOT BE
CONSOLIDATED**

- Many participants felt that the number of municipalities should not be reduced through consolidation.
- Such participants are opposed to consolidation for all or some of the following reasons:
 - Concern for loss of community identity;
 - Concern of being swallowed by a larger entity;
 - Concern for loss of representation and local input into decision-making;
 - Concern that it could result in potential reduction or increased expectations in levels of service delivery;
 - Concern that consolidation/amalgamation will not save any money;
 - Concern regarding potential financial and environmental liabilities of some municipalities being consolidated;

- Belief that different communities and ratepayers have different governance needs and interests;
- Belief that "small is beautiful and better" – more effective, efficient, accountable and autonomous;
- The consolidation/regionalization of health and school districts promised more power, more democratic control and improved service, and there isn't a sense that any of these have been realized.

MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED

- A substantial number of participants felt there should be a reduction in the number of municipalities through either minor or major consolidation.

Minor Consolidation

- Those who favour minor consolidation, believe consolidation should be limited to the following situations:
 - Consolidation of small urban municipalities into adjacent rural municipalities.
 - Consolidation of rural municipalities facing financial pressures into other rural municipalities.

Major Consolidation

- Those who favour major consolidation of municipalities, feel that Saskatchewan has too many municipal governments and jurisdictions for a province of one million people.
- Many believe major consolidation is necessary for some or all of the following reasons:
 - The nature of community is changing and expanding;
 - Lack of viability and sustainability of many municipalities;
 - Lack of inter-municipal cooperation among existing municipalities;
 - Duplication of services;
 - Existing system breeds conflict between urban and rural municipalities and has contributed to the decline of rural Saskatchewan;
 - Larger units would result in larger population, resource and revenue/tax bases;
 - Many municipal functions and services can be done more effectively over larger areas;
 - Small municipalities foster favoritism, corruption and conflict of interest;
 - Potential for significant cost savings in administration and shared service delivery;
 - Easier to attract and encourage economic development;
 - Consolidation/amalgamation has worked in other jurisdictions and in education, resulting in cost savings and service improvements.

THE PROVINCE HAS A ROLE IN FACILITATING CONSOLIDATION

- Many participants believe the provincial government can and must play a major role in the consolidation of municipalities in terms of the following:
 - Eliminating disincentives and uncertainties regarding the responsibility for potential liabilities – financial and environmental – of dissolved, reverted or consolidated municipalities.
 - Ensuring representation and/or continued level of service delivery to residents of dissolved, reverted or consolidated municipality through legislation or other contractual means.
 - Streamlining the process of voluntary consolidation, reversion and dissolution.
 - Facilitating voluntary consolidation, reversion and dissolution by providing education and information regarding costs and benefits and helping communities overcome problems and disputes.

C. CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPAL & NON-MUNICIPAL ENTITIES

THERE SHOULD BE NO CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPAL & NON-MUNICIPAL ENTITIES

- Many participants maintain that there should be no consolidation of municipal and non-municipal entities, particularly health and education boards.
- Such participants believe that health and education should have a separate system of governance.

THERE SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATION OF MUNICIPAL & NON-MUNICIPAL ENTITIES

- Many participants agreed that the number of different local, regional and even provincial agencies, boards, and commissions should be consolidated and coordinated to produce a less fractured and less fragmented system that is more efficient, effective and easy to understand.
- These participants indicated that Saskatchewan has too many governments and special purpose bodies, all of which create unnecessary confusion, complexity, duplication of services, increased bureaucracy, and increased costs not only for governments but also for those who have to deal with them.
- They added that the greatest costs of all are the lost development opportunities that result from the inability to make key decisions on development quickly and effectively within such a highly complex and confusing governance and administrative system.
- Some added the large number of municipal and non-municipal governing and administrative entities create considerable pressures on elected and appointed officials and volunteers who have to coordinate their activities and attend all the related meetings.

10. MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION SHOULD
BE LESS PRESCRIPTIVE AND
RESTRICTIVE

- Participants indicated a strong preference for legislation that is less prescriptive and restrictive in terms of what municipal governments can do and how they are to do it.
- They expressed a strong preference for flexible legislation that allows broad municipal discretion and autonomy within their spheres of jurisdiction.
- Toward that end, some indicated that it would be preferable to list what municipalities are not mandated or authorized to do, rather than all the things they are mandated or authorized to do.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION SHOULD
BE STREAMLINED AND SIMPLIFIED

- There was widespread agreement that municipal legislation should be streamlined and simplified.

THE CURRENT CORE STATUTES
SHOULD BE RETAINED

- Some participants felt that the current core statutes (i.e., *The Northern Municipalities Act*, *The Urban Municipality Act*, and *The Rural Municipality Act*) should be retained, albeit in a streamlined and simplified form.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION SHOULD
BE CONSOLIDATED

- Some participants felt that the current core statutes should be consolidated into a single statute that serves all municipalities equally well.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION SHOULD
BE TAILORED TO TYPES OF
MUNICIPALITIES

- Many participants had differences of opinion on whether any of the three major existing municipal acts (i.e., northern, rural, and urban) should be consolidated.
- Many felt that the differences among the different types of municipalities – urban, rural and northern – were so great that each major category of municipality should have a separate and distinct municipal act.
- Some also indicated that perhaps it was necessary to establish separate legislation for cities.

1. APPROACHES TO INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION SHOULD ONLY OCCUR ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS

INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION SHOULD ONLY OCCUR ON A MANDATORY BASIS

There was some divergence of views on approaches to increasing and improving inter-municipal cooperation.

- Some participants indicated that increased and improved inter-municipal cooperation should occur on a voluntary basis.
- Many commented that cooperation cannot be mandated, and that if it is mandated or imposed, eventually it will break down.
- Some participants indicated that increased and improved inter-municipal cooperation should occur on a mandatory basis.
- Such participants indicated the voluntary approach to inter-municipal cooperation was the preferred and ideal choice.
- However, many commented that if inter-municipal cooperation is not mandated in some fashion, it will continue to be non-existent in some areas of the province or not increase beyond its present level in other areas.

2. APPROACHES TO CONSOLIDATING THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

CONSOLIDATION SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY

CONSOLIDATION SHOULD BE MANDATED

There was a divergence of views on approaches to consolidating the municipal system.

- Many participants suggested that consolidation should be a voluntary process with common sense dictating when and how it should take place.
- Such participants indicated that consolidation is a natural progression resulting from population loss and declining tax/property base, and that it will occur when individual municipalities and municipal councils realize they can no longer meet the needs of their ratepayers.
- Many participants suggested that voluntary consolidation is the ideal and preferred approach, but in order for any significant changes to take place, it will have to be mandated.
- Many cited extreme examples of municipalities who refuse to voluntarily consolidate despite the fact that they have small numbers of permanent residents, who can no longer elect a full slate of councillors, or provide essential services.
- Others mentioned that for whatever reason, municipalities have not made use of existing legislation, policy or incentives to consolidate, or will only amalgamate with prosperous rather than declining or financially troubled municipalities. They concluded if that were allowed to occur, it would create a patchwork system with numerous "have-not municipalities" with whom none of the "have municipalities" will want to consolidate.

3. APPROACHES TO RENEWING OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

RENEWAL OF OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM SHOULD BE NEGOTIATED

- There was a shared view on the approach to renewing other elements of the municipal system.
- Most participants favoured a consultative and cooperative approach among municipalities, municipal associations and the provincial government toward a negotiated agreement on renewal of the various other parts of the municipal system such as municipal functions, finances, governance and management.

VISION OF THE IDEAL MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Purposeful Municipal Governments

Powerful Municipal Governments

Capable Municipal Governments

Cooperative Municipal Governments

Democratic, Accessible & Accountable Municipal Governments

Effective & Efficient Municipal Governments

VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR RENEWAL

Need For Renewal To Municipal System

- No Renewal is Needed to the Municipal System
- Minor Renewal is Needed to the Municipal System
- Major Renewal is Needed to the Municipal System

Renewal of the "Special Purpose Bodies" System

- The "Special Purpose Bodies" System Should be Renewed in Light of Renewal in the Municipal System

Renewal of the Provincial Government System

- The Provincial Government System Should be Renewed in Light of Renewal in the Municipal System

VIEWS ON MAJOR PRESSURES FACING THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Demographic Trends

- Municipalities are Facing Pressures from Demographic Trends

Economic Trends

- Municipalities are Facing Pressures from Economic Trends

VIEWS ON GENERAL PROBLEMS IN THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Problems of Various Elements of the Municipal System

- **Municipal Purpose:**
 - Unclear & Undefined Municipal Purpose
- **Municipal Status:**
 - Lack of Recognition of Municipal Status

• **Municipal Powers:**

- Insufficient Authority and Autonomy
- Insufficient Corporate, Regulatory, Financial & Service Powers

• **Provincial-Municipal Relations:**

- Unclear Division of Roles and Responsibilities
- Insufficient Provincial-Municipal Consultations
- Insufficient Provincial-Municipal Coordination
- Too Much Provincial Dominance & Interference
- Too Much Provincial Downloading

• **Municipal Functions:**

- Unclear Division of Municipal Functions
- Inadequate Planning & Development

• **Municipal Finances:**

- Insufficient Financial Resources
- Over Reliance on Property Tax Base
- Inequitable Distribution of Costs & Benefits of Developments among Neighbouring Municipalities

• **Municipal Governance:**

- Insufficient Accessibility & Accountability
- Insufficient Interest in Municipal Elections

• **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:**

- Insufficient Communication, Coordination & Cooperation
- Duplication of Services, Facilities, Equipment & Staff
- Inequities in Sharing Costs and Benefits
- Too Many Overlapping Jurisdictions

• **Forms of Municipalities:**

- Inadequate Enforcement of Criteria for Municipal Status
- Too Many Small Municipalities
- Too Many Special Purpose/Local Authorities

• **Municipal Legislation:**

- Unduly Complex & Confusing
- Unduly Inflexible & Restrictive

VIEWS ON CAPACITY PROBLEMS IN THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Organizational Capacity

- There are Problems of Organizational Capacity

Planning and Development Capacity

- There are Problems in Planning and Development Capacity

Service Delivery Capacity

- There are Problems in Service Delivery Capacity

VIEWS ON THE DIRECTIONS FOR RENEWAL

PURPOSE OF MUNICIPALITIES

- The Purpose of Municipalities Should be Clarified
- The Purpose of Municipalities Should be Stated in Legislation
- The Purpose of Municipalities Should be to Govern, Manage, Plan, Develop & Service Communities

STATUS OF MUNICIPALITIES

- Municipalities Should be Recognized as an Order of Government
- The Status of Municipalities Should be Entrenched in Documents

AUTHORITY AND AUTONOMY OF MUNICIPALITIES

- The Authority & Autonomy of Municipalities Should be Increased
- Provincial Authority in Municipal Matters Should be Limited

PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONS

- The Provincial-Municipal Relationship Should be Improved

FUNCTIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES

- Functions of Municipal Governments Should be Clearly Identified in Legislation
- Municipalities Should Perform Each of the Core Governance Functions
- Municipalities Should be Responsible both for "Hard" and "Soft" Services
- Municipal Governments Should be Primarily Responsible for "Hard" Services
- Municipal Governments Should Not be Responsible for Health, Education, or Welfare
- Other Functions & Services Should be Determined by Local Electorate

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

- Municipal Governments Should Have Access to Sufficient Financial Resources
- Municipal Governments Should Have Greater Property Tax Room
- Municipal Governments Should Have More Freedom in Taxation Matters
- The Provincial-Municipal Revenue-Sharing System Should be Improved
- The Provincial Grants to Municipalities System Should be Improved

INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

- Inter-Municipal Cooperation Should be Increased and Improved
- Provincial Government Should Facilitate Inter-Municipal Cooperation

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- Municipal Government Should be Close to Residents and Ratepayers
- Municipal Governments Should be Responsive to Residents and Ratepayers
- Municipal Governments Should be Accountable to Residents and Ratepayers
- Municipal Governments Should Increase Instances of Direct Democracy
- Municipal Governments Should be Transparent, Accessible and Accountable
- A Municipal Ombudsperson Office Should be Established
- Municipal Election Processes Should be Improved

FORMS OF MUNICIPALITIES

Types of Municipalities

- The Current Types of Municipalities Should be Retained
- Some Current Types of Municipalities Should be Eliminated
- Some New Types of Municipalities Should be Established
- New Types of Regional Municipal "Authorities" Should be Established
- New Types of Regional Municipal "Authorities" Should Not be Established
- The Current Classification Criteria For Municipalities Should be Changed
- The Criteria For All Municipalities Should be Enforced by the Minister

Consolidation of Municipalities

- Municipalities Should Not be Consolidated
- Municipalities Should be Consolidated
- There Should be Minor Consolidation of Municipalities
- There Should be Major Consolidation of Municipalities

Consolidation of Municipal & Non-municipal Entities

- There Should be No Consolidation of Municipal & Non-Municipal Entities
- There Should be Consolidation of Municipal & Non-Municipal Entities

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

- Municipal Legislation Should be Less Prescriptive and Restrictive
- Municipal Legislation Should be Streamlined and Simplified
- The Current Core Statutes Should be Retained
- Municipal Legislation Should be Consolidated
- Municipal Legislation Should be Tailored to Types of Municipalities

VIEWS ON APPROACHES TO RENEWAL

Approaches to Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- Inter-Municipal Cooperation Should Only Occur on a Voluntary Basis
- Inter-Municipal Cooperation Should Occur on a Mandatory Basis

Approaches to Consolidating the Municipal System

- Consolidation Should be Voluntary
- Consolidation Should be Mandated

Approaches to Renewing Other Elements of the Municipal System

- Renewal of Other Elements of the Municipal System Should be Negotiated